

## AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

### December 10, 2009

**Members Present:** Daniel Clapp, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Doris Holden, Rosemary Kofler, Kathy Koplow, Mary Jane Laus, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo

**Select Board Liaison:** absent

**Staff Present:** Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Priscilla Robbins (Senior Aid Program)

**Guests:** Larry Shaffer, Town Manager, Shirley Lauder, Vice-President and Assistant Treasurer of the Friends; Alan Root, Eric Magazu

#### **Welcome:**

Dan Clapp, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:07 AM.

#### **Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

The minutes of the November 12, 2009 meeting were approved and accepted. Doris noted that the amended bylaws of the Friends were approved.

#### **Friends' Treasurer Report:**

**Doris** provided a handout showing \$11,494.02 in the checking account and \$67,059.33 in the investment account.

**Karen** reported donations of \$5,268.00 to date for FY2010. Since the solicitation letter went out in the December news letter, \$2,630 has come in. The report was approved and accepted.

#### **Conversation with Larry:**

**Larry** spoke about proposals relative to the use of space at Bangs. He noted the several changes that have already occurred with consolidation of programs. The Community Block Grant and Social Justice Grant offices have moved to Town Hall. Veterans Service has consolidated with Northampton and is in a smaller space at Bangs. The Health Department is moving to the first floor suite. It will restore its focus to its core mission of health, vaccinations, and inspections. Big Brothers and Big Sisters is looking for a new location. Hence space is being opened up at Bangs. Larry would like to be involved in discussions about remaining programs and considerations about how space can be efficiently and effectively reassigned for other uses.

Conversations with Cooley Dickinson about a health/rehab center at Bangs have taken place. It is still in the concept stage. If a proposal comes in, the COA will be the first to know about it. Larry stated that he wants the COA and the Senior Center to be involved in the process. Although money is a factor in the discussion, Larry is interested in the Town's relationship with Cooley Dickinson Hospital. He is concerned that Amherst is without a hospital facility. The Master Plan includes recommendations for a closer partnership with CDH, with the ultimate goal of establishing a hospital in Amherst. The time it takes for ambulance transport to CDH is a big factor. The health/rehab program under consideration would provide exercise and equipment for cardiac and orthopedic rehab, focusing on seniors. CDH would manage the program and provide staff.

**Dan** stressed the value of Room 101 to the Senior Center for programs that cannot be accommodated elsewhere. That is a major concern for the sake of the seniors in Town who rely heavily on programs in that space. Larry said we need to look at the programs that are in that room and see if they are suited for another part of the building. If Big Brothers and the Health Department vacate the whole upstairs that space could be devoted to programs, but that is something we should talk about. Larry would like us to be part of the planning process. Our input is important and valuable.

Dan and Rosemary expressed concern about the liability risk of a cardiac rehab facility at Bangs, which has the potential for a medical emergency without appropriate staff.

Larry urged us to save our critique until we have a proposal and a program to consider. He urged us to view the opening up of space at Bangs as an opportunity, not a threat. Larry said he would be happy to come to every COA meeting to maintain an ongoing dialogue.

**Alan Root**, former member of the COA, talked about Larry's conversation as being in the spirit of openness and transparency. Times of economic hardship provide an opportunity to change things around and be more diligent about every dollar that is spent. Everyone in this building needs to be open and also constructively critical.

On food distribution days Alan sees more and more people in need at the Senior Center. Our seniors may appear to be affluent but that affluence is paper-thin. Many are needy.

Regarding the Town budget, Larry said it is still a work in progress. Conversations continue with staff about consolidations and trying to find solutions. He urged people to wait until a proposal is on the table before taking a position. A \$1.3 million deficit would reflect the loss of 22 employee salaries – about 12% of our 191 employees. Consolidations, efficiencies and revenue enhancers are all being put together to avoid these draconian cuts in an attempt to keep the core organization intact. We need creative ideas and the willingness of all to work collaboratively on this. Larry promised to come to each of our meetings and bring us up to date on everything he knows. Direct information will prevent speculation and angst.

Larry's budget will be submitted January 16.

## **SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE**

### **Ad Hoc Survey Committee:**

**Joel** reported that as of November 17 Randall Stokes received 427 surveys. An additional 700 surveys were sent out about November 23 bringing the total sent to 1800. Since that time 150 additional surveys were received. Once all likely responses are received, Randall will begin a preliminary analysis of the results. He will then send a simple descriptive summary of all responses. A more complex analysis will follow. A written document will be ready sometime this winter. The prevailing concern is that the survey will not reflect the spectrum of seniors in Town, since low-income seniors often do not participate even though they use our facilities and services.

### **SHAG (Senior Health Advisory Group):**

**Dan** reported about this morning's meeting dedicated to the concern of continuity of care and helping the person who is discharged from the hospital reconnect to immediate medical care. Kate Fite discussed her involvement with public health students at UMass, teaching them to be advocates for seniors. **Juana Trujillo** is involved in that program. Three students are now working with three tenants at Ann Whalen and Chestnut Court. Students meet with each potential patient to develop a rapport, and then follow the patient through doctor appointments, health care, treatment plans and understanding medical jargon.

Dr. Lisa Raskin, Amherst College, and Lisa White, VNA, are also involved in the continuity of care discussions.

### **Highland Valley Elder Services:**

**Joan** reported on the meeting of last Monday. A representative of the Center for Ecological Technology spoke about energy audits for private homes, apartments and buildings. It is available to anyone and teaches people how to make their homes more energy efficient. There is no charge for the audit.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Formation of Joint COA and Friends Fundraising Sub-Committee:**

**Nancy and Shirley Lauder** spoke on behalf of the Friends. Elizabeth Kelly resigned as Clerk so the minutes of the meeting are not yet available. Doris will be Clerk. The last meeting was very positive. The Board understands the Senior Center budgetary needs. Doris is working on annual fiscal reports. The Variety Show, organized by Donna Lee, is the big fundraiser being planned for April 25, 2010.

Nancy asked if two or three COA members would be willing to come to the next Friends meeting to provide ideas, energy and help with fundraising events.

**Maura** said that fundraising is a process, which also involves marketing and development. The Senior Center, our purpose and what we do needs to be exposed to the public so that people understand the importance of maintaining our services. That process needs to take place before one can successfully fundraise.

Kent Faerber, a professional fundraiser, will be invited to the next COA/Friends meeting to advise us.

### **Formation of Advocacy and Political Action Sub-Committee:**

**Alan Root**, former COA member and an experienced political activist, spoke of the need to form a group with some expertise in this area. We need to organize now to be ready to respond when Larry's proposals come through. We need to change our strategy of asking people to "give" and instead ask that they "invest" – invest in their future for the day

when they will be elderly. We need a strong committee with a demonstrated capacity to deal with Town Meeting and advocacy issues. We need more senior members on Town Meeting. Seniors are active voters. **Dan** suggested greater exposure in the newspaper.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **Outreach Grant Update:**

**Maura's** HVES grant (October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010) pays Evelyn Ross 5 hours per week to work with Juana and Kathy on 'building caring communities' within Clark House, Ann Whalen and Chestnut Court. They are looking at what services the residents want and helping residents to identify programs and activities that would help increase a sense of community within those residences. Wendy Ewald, an artist and teacher at Amherst College, will be working with residents and other students on non-monetary exchanges - trading services or bartering amongst residents and students (needs and offers). Wendy has created a public art display about the project in order to attract and educate the public. The Keefe Center at Amherst College has a "Main Bank" display. The grand opening will be on Friday, December 11 from 4 – 6 PM. The Senior Center has a "Branch Bank" display for which the grand opening will be from 6 – 7 PM on December 11.

A newsletter will be created with articles about people the students have interviewed and their experiences with non-monetary exchanges. Needs and offers can also be listed.

Nancy informed us that Amherst College would be giving a free supper for seniors at the Senior Center on Saturday, December 19.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM.

**The next meeting of the COA will be held on January 7, 2010 at 9:00 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the November 12, 2009 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.